



Preview of 2022 Grants from the Dairy Business Innovation Center



THE VIEW FROM 116 STATE STREET

Vermont is fortunate to have the Northeast Dairy Business Innovation Center (NE-DBIC) at the Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets. Funded by the USDA it is giving farmers and processors more options as they try to navigate a complicated and outdated federal dairy pricing system.

Vermont is a state whose agricultural communities and rural economies depend upon dairy. Nearly 65% of the state's agricultural receipts are directly attributable to dairy while close to 80% of the open land is managed by dairy farmers. Vermont produces two-thirds of all milk in New England, bringing close to \$2 billion in economic activity to the state every year. When Horizon Organic decided to drop dozens of products in the Northeast, the

Agency stepped in with task force and supported by the NE-DBIC.

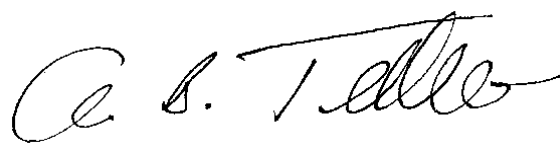
While dairy production is a critical component of Vermont's agriculture, the state is heavily dependent on processors and consumers in other states. Because of this regional interdependence, the Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets supports the efforts and recommendations put forward by the Northeast Dairy Task Force. While the Task Force was put in motion by the cancellation of organic farm contracts, the recommendations make it clear that regional dairy systems as a whole need further investment, attention, and opportunity.

The NE-DBIC is focused on many of the same critical aspects to developing a resilient northeast dairy community, including processing

expansion, overcoming distribution challenges, increasing consumer awareness, and supporting farms and creameries in being more competitive in the marketplace. The recommendations highlight the need for additional investment in small dairy communities across the region, creating stability and opportunity for a sector that has been under acute financial strain for the past six years.

For small dairy to survive in meaningful ways across the region, significant and forward-looking investment needs to occur. The recommendations provide options

for a path forward and highlight how they should work together to create a more powerful outcome. In many cases, the benefits extend well beyond the farm gate to consumers, institutional markets, distribution companies, and the cooperatives. We are focused on helping Vermont and the region address the ongoing issues surrounding organic and conventional dairy. I would encourage all farmers to follow what's happening with the Northeast Dairy Business Innovation Center.



— Anson Tebbetts, Secretary, Agency of Agriculture, Food & Markets

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This Month's Recipe

Ham and Cheese Muffins

Recipe courtesy New England Dairy

Ingredients

- 2 eggs
- 1 cup 1% milk
- 4 tbsp melted butter
- 2 tbsp honey
- 2 cups white whole wheat flour (or all-purpose flour)
- 1 tbsp baking powder
- 1/2 tsp salt
- 1/4 tsp pepper
- 8 ounces ham, chopped (about 1 1/2 cups)
- 1 1/2 cups shredded cheddar

Instructions

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Grease a muffin tin with cooking spray or oil. (Be sure to grease well.)
2. Whisk 2 eggs in a large mixing bowl. Add milk, melted butter, and honey. Whisk again until well combined.
3. Stir in flour, baking powder, salt, and pepper until just combined. Fold in the chopped ham and cheddar cheese.
4. Pour the batter into the muffin tin. Bake for approximately 20-25 minutes at 350 degrees, or until a toothpick inserted into the muffin comes out clean.



Danone Horizon Update

By Diane Bothfeld, VT Agency of Agriculture, Food & Markets

In December 2021, Danone Horizon made an announcement that will further affect Vermont Organic dairy farmers. The announcement provides more time for the dairy farmers who sell their milk to Danone Horizon to find a new market along with other forms of assistance.

The announcement contained four major points:

1. Dairy farmers who sell their milk to Danone Horizon in Vermont and the rest of the Northeast will have an extension of the existing contract to the end of February 2023 – adding six months until

the farms need to find a new market.

2. Danone Horizon is providing financial advisors to farmers at no cost to assist in preparing for the upcoming change.
3. Danone Horizon is providing a transition payment of \$2.00 per hundredweight on the last six months of milk volume sold to Danone Horizon. This can occur at any time since the first letter in August 2021 was sent to farmers by Danone Horizon.
4. Danone Horizon will explore co-investment in solutions in the Northeast to strengthen processing, transportation, and infrastructure for the dairy industry. Danone Horizon looks to USDA and the Northeast

States to assist in directing what projects are needed prior to investing.

This support is designed to ease the impact of the Danone Horizon transition on the organic dairy community in Vermont and Danone Horizon is motivated by a genuine desire to create a greater window of opportunity for the farms, industry, and governments to address the systemic challenges facing organic dairy in the Northeast.

Northeast Organic Family Farm Partnership

Gary Hirshberg, past CEO of Stonyfield Yogurt assembled a group in the Northeast to launch a campaign to drive consumer support and



purchase of organic dairy products. This program launched the week of January 10th with the Northeast Organic Family Farm Partnership. Its mission is to encourage grocers, food co-ops, restaurants, and foodservice venues to commit to increasing their purchases from the brands who get their milk from these organic dairy farms. More information can be found at: <https://www.saveorganic-familyfarms.org/>

For information about the task force or to read the recommendations provided to USDA, please go to <https://agriculture.vermont.gov/administration/danonehorizon-task-force>

Vermont 4-H Program Receives Agrotechnology Grant

By UVM Extension

The University of Vermont (UVM) Extension 4-H is the recipient of a three-year Food and Agricultural Non-formal Education grant from the National Institute of Food and Agriculture.

The \$645,856 grant will fund the AgroTek Innovation program, which takes a transdisciplinary approach to provide Grade 7-12 students with immersive research experiences in agrotechnology. Participants will have an opportunity to conduct experiments using an inquiry-based approach to explore four innovative agrotechnology curricula: culturing cells for healthier soils, shifting the waste to value paradigm, creating smarter plastics with plants and using virtual reality for more precise agriculture.

"The AgroTek Innovation program will offer timely, hands-on and engaging experiences to build a technology-savvy workforce for Vermont's agricultural future," says Sarah Kleinman, director of the Vermont 4-H program. "It will bridge UVM College of Agriculture and Life Sciences research with 4-H experiences, supporting career exploration by connecting participants to UVM researchers and undergraduate mentors."

The funds will be used to support several non-formal educational experiences beginning with two VTeen 4-H Science Pathways Cafés this winter. Culturing Cells for Healthier Soils, the January 22 café, features Eric Bishop von Wettberg, UVM Plant and Science Department. Steve Kostell, UVM Community Development and Applied

Economics, will lead a session, Waste to Value Paradigm, on February 5.

AgroTek Summer Academies, focusing more in depth on these same two topics, will be offered June 26-July 2 on the UVM campus. Each academy is open to 12 students. In subsequent years, one new academy will be added each year.

"The academies are residential, week-long experiences for teens to really learn about the content and related technology and then develop a project that helps to promote the safe use of that agriscience skill," Kleinman says. "They also help to build relationships with students and faculty members that are meant to support a pathway to higher education and a career in food and agriculture."

Academy participants will have an opportunity to take part in the

AgroTek Innovation Slam on August 5, a pitch-style competition where student teams will share projects that demonstrate what they learned from these first two agrotechnology curricula and create outreach materials that support the safe use of these technologies.

"Through these experiences, participants will begin to make decisions regarding the design, execution and evaluation of projects that will build public confidence in the safe, equitable and enhanced use of technology in agriculture, the environment and food systems," Kleinman says.

The AgroTek Innovation program will reach over 400 participants and be led by a trans-disciplinary team from UVM.

To learn more, contact Kleinman at sarah.kleinman@uvm.edu

DAIRY BUSINESS INNOVATION CENTER

Seeking Reviewers for NE-DBIC Grant Applications

Do you want to help the Northeast Dairy Business Innovation Center (NE-DBIC) make impactful investments that advance the regional dairy industry? The NE-DBIC is currently recruiting people with experience in the dairy sector across the northeast region to help review applications for NE-DBIC's upcoming competitive funding opportunities including topics of food safety; marketing and branding; agritourism; and innovation in packaging, dairy processing, and production. Grant reviewers will score applications to identify projects that best meet the goals of each grant program. Reviewers are eligible to apply for and participate in NE-DBIC funded grants and other opportunities themselves. If you're interested in being a reviewer in 2022, please email Julia.Scheier@vermont.gov

Vermont Cheese Council Engages Consumers with 2nd Annual Scavenger Hunt

The Vermont Cheese Council launched The Hunt, a statewide scavenger hunt adventure, in 2020 to benefit Vermont cheesemakers and other value-added dairy businesses as well as to engage locals and visitors during the pandemic. Clue packets for each of six regions of the state lead participants to over 1,000 Vermont businesses and tourist destinations, including cheesemakers that are members of the Vermont Cheese Council. In 2021, The Hunt saw increased participation and enthusiastic reviews from participants. Over 200 participants submitted answers to the clues for a chance to win prize boxes of Vermont cheeses. Others simply used the clue packets as a "travel guide" to help them explore Vermont's outdoor environment, history, and of course, cheeses. The Vermont Cheese Council's goals for the event included making a fun, free, and accessible opportunity for residents and tourists alike to engage, subtly encouraging participants to support local cheesemakers, and benefitting both Vermont's cheese and non-cheese businesses. The Hunt is supported by funding from the Northeast Dairy Business Innovation Center and promises to be an impactful event over the long term, with one participant reporting, "I loved it and we hope to come back and do a different region every year." For more information, visit vtcheese.com/hunt or contact Marty Mundy at marty@vtcheese.com



Free Resources for Dairy Farms

Check out these free resources for dairy farmers:

Dairy Herd Management Technical Assistance from University of Vermont Extension: UVM Extension specialists are available to work directly with dairy farm owners and managers to improve their bottom line through changes in management practices. The team of technical service providers provides support in milk quality, grazing and pasture management, dairy nutrition, animal husbandry, animal housing and facilities, and personnel management. Assistance is available for cow, sheep, and goat dairy farms of all scales. This program is made possible with funding from the Northeast Dairy Business Innovation Center. Learn more at go.uvm.edu/dairyassistance or by contacting Tony Kitsos at tony.kitsos@uvm.edu or (802) 524-6501.

Dairy Sheep Workshop Series: Vermont Shepherd and industry experts present a series for sheep dairy farmers and those interested in starting a sheep dairy business to explore elements of successful dairy sheep farming in the Northeast. Five workshop sessions in March through October 2022 will cover lambing, milking, pasture and animal management, sheep health, and processing and marketing sheep milk. This series is made possible by a Sheep & Goat Dairy Supply Chain grant from the Northeast Dairy Business Innovation Center. Learn more at vermontshepherd.com/2022-dairy-sheep-workshop-series

Spanish-Language Dairy Worker Online Training: The Cornell College of Agriculture and Life Sciences and the University of Vermont Extension are collaborating to offer a self-paced training certificate program designed to develop the workforce skills needed on a modern dairy farm. Topics include cow handling, dairy cow nutrition, herd health, milk quality, and milking systems. All materials are presented and written in Spanish through online modules. Learn more at cals.cornell.edu/education/degrees-programs/spanish-online-dairy-worker-training

Mediation Services for the Dairy Farming Community: The Vermont Agricultural Mediation Program offers free mediation services to help dairy farmers navigate financial challenges, farm transitions, neighbor conflicts, and more. Mediation is an informal process where parties meet with a neutral mediator who helps them negotiate their differences and find a mutually acceptable solution. Learn more at VTAMP.org or contact Matt Strassberg at matts@emcenter.org or (802) 583-1100.

Grants Available for Food Hub Infrastructure Support

By Julia Scheier, VT Agency of Agriculture, Food & Markets

The Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets (VAAFM) has received funding from the Northern Border Regional Commission (NBRC) to expand capacity and market access for Vermont’s nonprofit food hubs. Funding will support two to eight food hubs to help with critical infrastructure needs, enabling hubs to support more farm and food businesses, expand their workforce, and advance their ongoing efforts to access

larger metropolitan markets.

Eligibility

- Applicants must:
- Have federal nonprofit status,
 - Be located in Vermont, and
 - Operate a food hub in Vermont.

The organization must be able to demonstrate they have federal grant experience and organizational capacity related to economic development.

Funding Priorities

- Funding priorities include projects that demonstrate:
- Large infrastructure

- investments that will significantly increase the amount of Vermont products reaching new or expanded markets
- Increased capacity for food hubs to expand to large metropolitan markets outside of Vermont
- Increased sales to large-scale markets, measured in dollars and number of markets, both retail and wholesale, inside and outside of Vermont
- Increased purchasing from Vermont farm and food producers going to in state or out of state metropolitan markets
- Increased number of

jobs and percentage of jobs at Vermont Livable Wage, which as of 2020 is \$13.39/hour [1]

Award Information

Grants will range from \$25,000 to \$100,000 with available funding totaling \$300,000. Applicants are required to have a 25% match of requested award, which can be cash or in-kind. Projects will run from Spring 2022 – Spring 2024 and are subject to both state and federal program provisions.

How to Apply

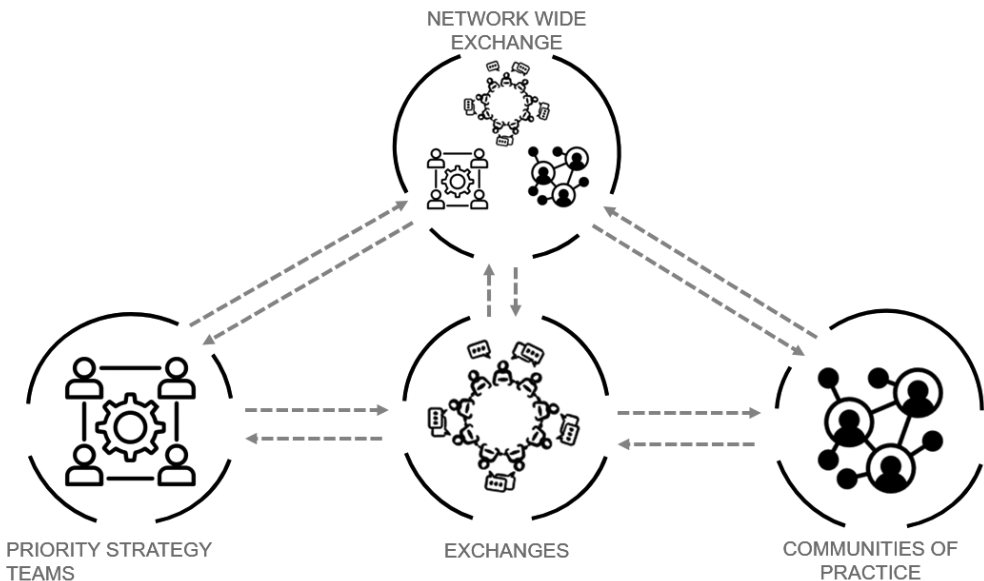
1. Download the Food Hub Infrastructure Request for

- Applications (RFA)
2. Review the WebGrants Application Guide.
- If you have not previously registered in WebGrants, complete the registration form. User registrations are approved in 1–2 business days.
- Submit your application in WebGrants between January 24, 2022 at 11:00am EST and February 25, 2022 at 2:00pm EST.
- If you have any questions about your eligibility, project scope, or other aspects of your application, please do not hesitate to contact Julie Scheier via email, julia.scheier@vermont.gov or by phone, 802-522-7042.

Farm to Plate Network Survey

The Farm to Plate Network has created a new network structure built around the *Vermont Agriculture and Food System Strategic Plan 2021-2030*. In this new structure, members will convene through Network Wide Exchanges, Priority Strategy Teams, Topic Exchanges, and Communities of Practice. If you’d like to be involved in this exciting Vermont agriculture and food system work, please take a few minutes to fill out this important survey so you can select the areas of the food system where you’d like to be involved. Your participation will be extremely helpful as Farm to Plate convenes new groups and transitions from their current website to a new site in early 2022.

Survey link: <https://bit.ly/F2PNewNetworkSurvey>



CSFO Reminder: Annual Certification Forms Were Due January 31, 2021

Any farm that has 50 acres or more of annual crops, houses 50 or more mature dairy cows, or 75 cattle, heifers, veal calves, cow/calf pairs, or youngstock, or 40 horses, or a combination of animals with a total live weight that equals more than 90,000 pounds is a CSFO and must register annually with the Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets. Visit www.agriculture.vermont.gov/csfo to learn more and to fill out an online or print version of the Annual Certification Form.



VERMONT AGRICULTURE & FOOD SYSTEM PLAN 2021 – 2030:

Food-Grade Grains

Editor's note: This brief is part of the Vermont Agriculture & Food System Plan 2021-2030 submitted to the legislature in January 2021. To read the full plan, please go to <https://agriculture.vermont.gov/document/vermont-agriculture-and-food-system-strategic-plan-2021-2030>

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What's At Stake?

Consumers are concerned about where their food comes from yet may not realize that the majority of local grain-based products (e.g., flour, bread, baked goods, beer, and spirits) are not made with locally grown grains. Local grains market opportunities are beyond direct-to-consumer, as brewers, maltsters, bakers, restaurant owners, food distributors, and others have all demonstrated interest in greater local product availability. For Vermont dairy farmers looking to diversify, growing grains is a feasible option because grains can be grown at scale, would benefit the forage rotation, are suitable for our soils and climate, and offer a diversified income stream.



For farms to continue to, or transition to, growing edible grain, there needs to be additional equipment and infrastructure in Vermont for growing and processing, strong regional markets, access to capital, and research-based technical assistance.

Current Conditions

Vermont was a national hub for grain production in the 1800s, but today, much of the grain and foods containing grains are imported into our state. This represents a missed opportunity for Vermont farmers and the numerous related businesses that could benefit from a local grains economy. Consumers are demanding goods that are grown or produced locally. Beer, bread, and spirits are all rapidly expanding Vermont products and markets requiring grain for production. Vermont brewers and distillers use an estimated 31 million pounds of grains each year with less than 5% of that grain coming from local or regional growers. Peterson's Quality Malt in Charlotte is providing brewers with a new malt made from local and regionally sourced

grains, and estimates the demand will increase to 8,000 acres by 2023.

Similarly, the number of bakeries in Vermont and surrounding states presents a significant opportunity for local flour production. However, Vermont lacks processing infrastructure to turn raw product into a flour, severely limiting opportunities for farmers and end users.

In order for the Vermont grain economy to grow, infrastructure is required for growers to harvest, dry, store, aggregate, mill, and process their harvested grains. At this time, such infrastructure does not exist in our state on a scale that is necessary to meet in-state demand, let alone sell into out-of-state markets.

Bottlenecks & Gaps

- There is limited information on local and regional market demand and opportunities for grain.
- There are limited Vermont processing facilities and those that exist have infrastructure needs (e.g., threshers, seed cleaners, mills, industrial dryers, grain bins, storage, etc.).
- The system for distributing and marketing Vermont grown grains, both in state and out-of-state, needs improvement.
- Farmers new to growing grain need individual technical assistance, both agronomic and financial.
- More research and testing services are needed to evaluate seed quality and assist growers with producing an exceptional

product for value-added sales.

Opportunities

- Grain centers, established in other regions, are facilities which allow grain growers to properly and efficiently grow, harvest, clean, dry, test, sort, market, and handle grains going to the local markets. Grain centers can create and support new jobs such as farmers, millers, process facility labor, skilled labor, engineers, scientists, economists, market analysts, researchers, etc.

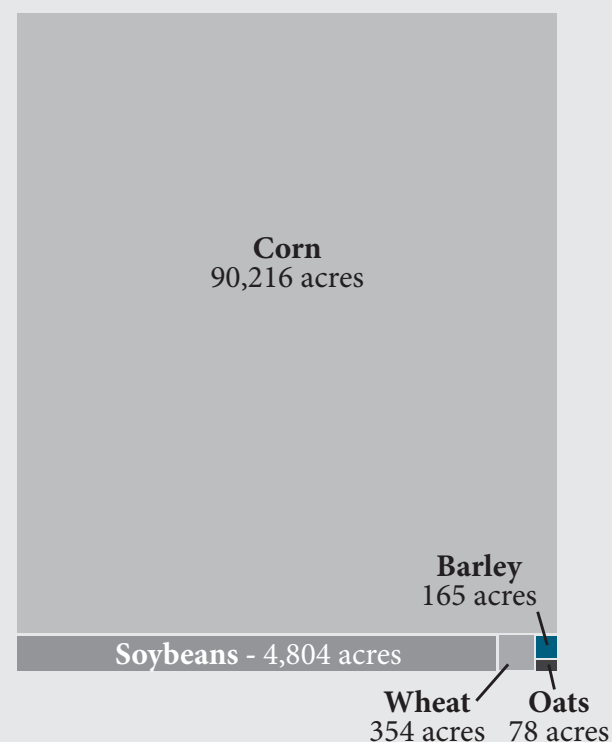
- Vermont-branded grains could leverage the state's brand and reputation for quality and farm-to-table foods and beverages.
- Investing in a local grain economy would help diversify farms and sustain or create new jobs in the agricultural sector (i.e., custom combine operations, grain equipment sales, grain processing jobs).

Recommendations

- Create a Vermont grains processing center with a multitude of benefits,

In 2017, Vermont had an estimated 147 bakeries, 35 breweries, and 12 distilleries. These numbers only include establishments captured by either the Bureau of Labor Statistics or the US Census Bureau Nonemployer Statistics and may be an undercount.

Conservative estimates show additional wheat demand requiring approximately 8,000 acres, and additional barley demand requiring 2,855 additional acres. The amount of existing corn and soy acreage shows Vermont has the land capacity to grow enough grain to meet estimated current food-grade demand.





including job creation and market security. This center would encourage more working lands to transition to grains, boosting the local markets. It would increase the reliability of grain quality for buyers, mitigating the risk of quality inconsistencies and boosting the potential monetary value for farmers. A grains center could control the quality

- Provide funding for capital expenses to eliminate some of the small-scale infrastructure gaps. This funding could be available to farmers, or to organizations and/or businesses that work directly with farmers.
- Develop regional market connections and a marketing mechanism for

Vermont grain products, particularly specialty grains. For example, fund the Northern Grain Growers Association to develop quality production standards for Vermont grain farmers to use if they so choose and fall under the qualifications of the program.

- Increase funding for research to identify marketable grains that grow well in Vermont,

such as barley, spelt, and heirloom wheat varieties. With climate change and ever more unpredictable weather and seasonal patterns, creating new varieties and production strategies that can be resilient in Vermont will become of even greater importance than it is now. Cost: \$75,000 per year.

- Increase funding for technical assistance. Farmers and grain related

businesses have technical assistance requirements that are not always readily available in Vermont. Building connections through UVM Extension and Northern Grain Growers Association to increase technical assistance availability would improve grain quantity and quality. Cost: one FTE at UVM Extension: \$125,000 per year.

VERMONT AGRICULTURE & FOOD SYSTEM PLAN 2021 – 2030:

Spirits

Editor's note: This brief is part of the Vermont Agriculture & Food System Plan 2021-2030 submitted to the legislature in January 2021. To read the full plan, please go to <https://agriculture.vermont.gov/document/vermont-agriculture-and-food-system-strategic-plan-2021-2030>

Lead Author: Daniel Keeney, Center for an Agricultural Economy
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What's At Stake?
The Vermont distilled spirits industry is little more than 20 years old and has an outsized impact on Vermont's identity as a destination for farm-to-table dining and craft beverages. Distilled spirits present an opportunity for Vermont farmers and food businesses to have their products showcased as part of a premium drink's narrative, for Vermont's

agricultural sector to access new buyers via shipment of spirits to export markets, and to build craft-spirits tourism on the shoulders of established beer tourism. While growth opportunities exist for distilling, and the industry can be an asset for developing Vermont's economy, brand value, and working landscape, supporting and expanding the industry further will require regulatory reform, capital and marketing investment, and supply

chain coordination between Vermont farmers, food businesses, and distillers.

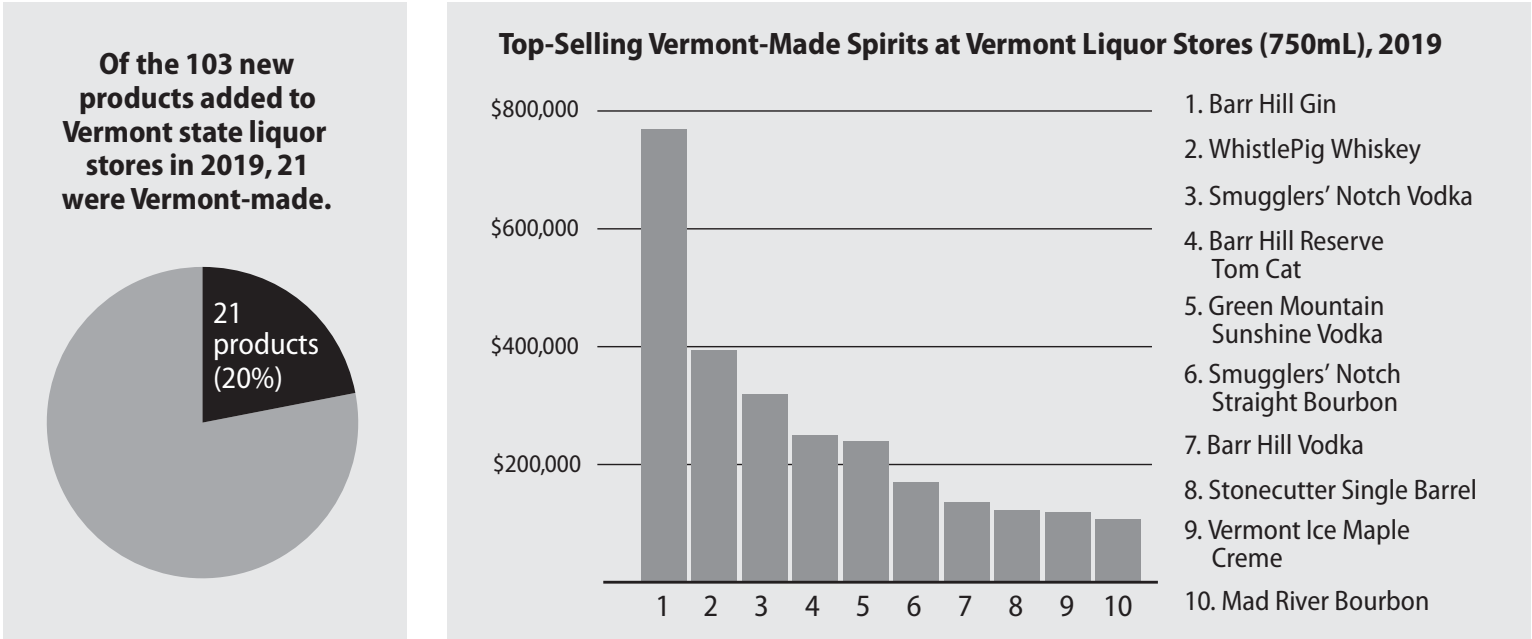
Current Conditions
Distilling is the craft of taking alcohol generated from fermentation and concentrating it through evaporation and condensation. The number of licensed distilleries in Vermont rapidly increased from a single distillery in 2000 to over twenty distilleries in 20201. Some Vermont distilleries purchase

a base alcohol ingredient—typically high-proof neutral grain spirits—and develop craft alcohol products from that base alcohol, while others produce their craft product from scratch, fermenting and distilling the sugars in grains, maple, and fruit before any finishing processes. While some are interested in sourcing their base sugars from locally grown products (particularly grains, including corn, rye, and malted barley), there is additional opportunity for

other agricultural products to be added back to the spirits as flavoring agents after fermentation and distillation.

The state of Vermont has made efforts to promote the distilling industry when possible. Generally speaking, Vermont's "control state" liquor laws do restrict liquor sales, including requiring bars and restaurants to pay full retail price for each bottle of alcohol. But the control state model also allows Vermont

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Spotlight on Salmonella

Understanding pathogens of concern for fruit and vegetable farms

By Ollie Cultrara, Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets

What comes to mind when you hear the phrase “produce safety”? You may have heard about foodborne illness outbreaks, such as the recent outbreaks of *E. coli* linked to baby spinach or *Salmonella* linked to onions. Because many fruits and vegetables are commonly eaten raw, we can’t rely on cooking to kill any harmful bacteria, viruses, or parasites that may be hitching a ride on our produce. Here in the Agency’s Produce Program, when we say “produce safety,” we mean protecting fresh fruits and vegetables from becoming contaminated with pathogens that can get people sick.

Understanding the pathogens we’re most concerned about—where they come from, the environments they thrive in, and how they spread—is key to preventing contamination from happening in the first place. Let’s look at one category of pathogens that is a culprit in some foodborne illness outbreaks: *Salmonella* bacteria.

What’s at stake

Bacteria in the genus *Salmonella* are responsible for over 1 million infections in the U.S. each year. *Salmonella* is the pathogen most frequently implicated in foodborne illness outbreaks that have been linked to fresh fruits and



vegetables. Most people with a *Salmonella* infection experience diarrhea, fever, and stomach cramps. While many infections last for a week or less and do not require treatment, serious cases can lead to additional, more severe, or long-lasting symptoms. In rare cases, infection may cause life-threatening complications. Those at the highest risk for severe illness from foodborne pathogens include young children, older adults, and people who are pregnant or have weakened immune systems—but anyone can become sick from contaminated food.

How it spreads

Salmonella bacteria can live in the intestines of animals, including livestock, wildlife, pets, and humans, and they are widely distributed in the environment. If soil, water, worker hands or clothing,

tools, equipment, or other surfaces that touch food come into contact with feces, they can transfer potential pathogens to produce. Factors to consider when assessing risks of *Salmonella* contamination in fruit and vegetable production include livestock and wildlife activity (especially birds), manure and compost use, agricultural water quality, worker hygiene, and sanitation.

Bacteria need nutrients, moisture, and the right temperatures to grow and divide. *Salmonella* bacteria can attach to crop surfaces and be transported through plant tissues. When the tissue of produce is cut or damaged, sugars can be released, providing a nutrient source for any pathogenic or spoilage bacteria present on the surface to multiply. In areas and equipment used for handling produce, spaces where water and organic debris collect are important

to clean regularly to avoid allowing these “harborage points” to become environments where bacteria can thrive.

Reducing risks

Farms are biodiverse environments where both beneficial and potentially harmful microorganisms are present, but microbial risks can be managed. Good agricultural practices to reduce the risk of produce becoming contaminated with pathogenic *Salmonella* include:

- Avoiding harvest of produce with visible animal damage or feces
- Excluding birds and other animals from buildings where produce and related equipment, such as harvest containers, are handled and stored
- Reinforcing good hygiene practices, including regular handwashing and clean clothing
- Understanding and protecting the quality of water used on produce
- Routinely cleaning,

and when appropriate, sanitizing, food contact surfaces

Next steps

The Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA) Produce Safety Rule (PSR) is a federal regulation that aims to prevent foodborne illnesses related to fresh fruits and vegetables. The PSR sets a science-based, national standard for safely growing, harvesting, packing and holding produce on farms. The Rule focuses on microbial contamination risks – conditions that could spread harmful pathogens to produce.

Whether or not your farm is subject to inspection under the PSR, the Vermont Agency of Agriculture’s Produce Program can help you implement practices to protect food safety on your farm. Contact the Vermont Produce Program at AGR.FSMA@vermont.gov, (802) 461-5128. For more information, visit agriculture.vermont.gov/produceprogram

Subscribe to Field Notes!

A quarterly newsletter from the Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food & Markets’ Food Safety and Consumer Protection Division

If you eat food or purchase commodities at retail in Vermont, you will benefit from quarterly updates from the Agency’s Food Safety and Consumer Protection Division, comprising the Dairy, Animal Health, Meat Inspection, Weights and Measures, and Agricultural Products Sections. Get a glimpse into how this specialized team ensures safe food and fair markets for all Vermonters! To subscribe, visit here: <https://agriculture.vermont.gov/administration/vaafm-news>

Conservation in Action with Steve Stocking

By Marilia Muschett, ECO AmeriCorps member serving with the Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets Water Quality Division

As a member of the board of the Connecticut River Watershed Farmers Alliance (CRWFA), Steven Stocking has seen the benefits of the Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food and Market's Capital Equipment Assistance Program (CEAP) around the area. Stocking manages the CRWFA's three drills that plant hay, legumes, and cover crops across this significant watershed, each of which is a different model that is suited for different landscapes, crops, and roads. All three drills were purchased with the assistance of grant programs



such as CEAP and have seen a lot of use locally.

In an interview, Steven Stocking reflected that the Farmers Alliance is a useful resource for farmer-to-

farmer recommendations on conservation tools and techniques. Stocking personally spends a lot of time taking the no-till drills to farmers, explaining how

they work, and recalibrating them. In addition, he sees that CRWFA can play a valuable role in being a reference for funding and technical assistance programs.

On his own farm, Stocking recently successfully purchased a 6-row no-till John Deere planter with CEAP and Rural Development funds. He has already planted nearly 300 acres of corn with that drill, of which over 100 acres were planted into old sod. He exclaims, "These planters work great, planted right in, and did a good job." He also shared an example of planting into old cover crop, where the corn fared well due to the improved soil-to-seed contact by the closers on the planter.

Another advantage of the no-till planter was the time and fuel saved through double cropping. Stocking explains, "It saved a lot of fuel, and was just so much easier. It enables you to plant

when you have cover crop or are planting after first cutting or on nubbed down land. Planting no-till keeps you planting in conditions that would not have been able to have been operated on had it been fitted up ground, plowed and harrowed. With new wet spots and farmers trying to plant as much ground as they have historically, these no-till planters can go through it without disturbing ground cover, while still allowing space for the other crop to establish itself."

While the grants take upfront effort, for Stocking and the CRWFA community, "the money is very helpful as the milk market is so volatile and you can't count on the money. But anybody who goes for the grant believes in what they're doing because it is a fair amount of work. You learn as you apply to the grant, you're looking at the equipment, you're looking at what it involves and trying to make sure you have a grant proposal that is going to be accepted." Stocking feels supported by the Agency's broad spectrum of programs that can help all types of farms and niches in the agricultural sector in Vermont.

If farmers in the Connecticut River Watershed are interested in learning more about the use of no-till equipment or borrowing CRWFA's drills in future years, they can contact Steve Stocking at 802-333-4840 or Jennifer Byrne at 802-369-3167 or WhiteRiverNRCD@gmail.com.

Produce Safety Alliance Grower Training: March 8 & 9

By Ollie Cultrara, VT Agency of Agriculture, Food & Markets

Fruit and vegetable growers and those who work with farms growing produce are invited to participate in Produce Safety Alliance Grower Training. The interactive training provides a foundation in how to identify microbial risks on the farm, best practices you can use to reduce risks of contamination, and the minimum standards required under the Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA) Produce Safety Rule.

Participants will learn from other growers, get their food safety questions answered, and leave with ideas to apply

in developing a culture of food safety, quality, and efficiency on your farm. This training is one way to satisfy the FSMA Produce Safety Rule requirement that requires "At least one supervisor or responsible party for your farm" to complete food safety training (§112.22(c)).

This eight-hour course is being hosted via Zoom video conference by the Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food & Markets Produce Program and the University of Vermont Extension Produce Safety Team on March 8 and 9, 2022 from 1 to 5:30 pm. Registration costs \$20 per person. For more information and to register by February 16 at 11:59 pm, visit agriculture.vermont.gov/produceprogram.

Food System Plan

continued from page 7

to support and protect our Vermont distilling industry. Vermont has worked to foster the local spirits industry by allowing direct sales of spirits at distilleries, farmers markets, and off-site tasting rooms, and is lenient in keeping in-state spirits listed and available through their state-contracted liquor stores. Therefore, distillers in the state are ambivalent about a transition to a free market model for sales of distilled spirits.

Bottlenecks & Gaps

- Spirits sales must reach both tourists and out-of-state markets; in-state sales alone will not support the industry.
- Costs of production for distilleries making their own base alcohols are substantially higher and these distilleries are challenged to compete on price with national brands.
- Major financial hurdles stand in the way of new distilleries opening, with reported up-front capital investments of \$250,000 to \$500,000. The growth stage of a distillery business is costly, due to marketing expenses and holding aging inventory. In some cases, start-ups will require independent wealth, or angel investment, to sustain

expenses for several years.

- The complex production process involves significant up-front cost, specific equipment, stringent regulation, and quite a bit of knowledge and is therefore not something easily added to a farm as a new enterprise.
- Vermont's "control state" model for sales of spirits protects local distilleries as they build their brands and product lines but also makes expanding to unrestricted markets beyond our borders challenging.

Opportunities

- Farms interested in value-added processing into liquor can turn \$500 of corn and other grains into whiskey worth over \$10,000 in full retail value.
- Financial success can be achieved with either a low volume, direct-sale business model or high-volume production paired with a national marketing campaign.
- It is not practical for many distilleries to source their primary ingredients from Vermont, but there is an opportunity to showcase Vermont-grown elements of a product, and an opportunity for distilleries and farms to co-market and gain significantly more value from crops that are used on a limited basis.
- Numerous distilleries

have established supply chain relationships with Vermont producers. Examples include gin and vodka using honey, rum using local maple syrup, and other local spirits including barley, lavender, cucumbers, hot peppers, and elderflowers, to name a few.

- Grains and apples, both sources of sugar for base alcohols, could be significant Vermont-grown ingredients in a future expansion of Vermont distilled spirits.

Recommendations

- Develop best practices and guidelines to help distilleries forge supply relationships with local farmers, and develop in-state infrastructure (e.g., a centralized mill and quality testing lab) for standardizing and processing specific products for use in distilling, including Vermont-grown grain (see Food-Grade Grains, Beer, Bread briefs).
- The State of Vermont should invest in marketing for Vermont-made and Vermont-grown spirits, and spirits-related tourism. The Departments of Liquor and Lottery (DLL) and Tourism and Marketing could partner with the Distilled Spirits Council of Vermont (DSCV) to improve the quality of support and information around tourism. DLL could promote Vermont spirits with a Vermont-Made Spirits Month based on successful models in other states. DLL could raise its own revenue by creating an e-commerce portal for Vermont-made spirits,

with fulfillment based out of its Montpelier warehouse, creating a new FTE and quickly recouping investment costs. (See Major Metropolitan Markets brief.)

- Vermont Technical College should partner with DSCV to develop better training opportunities for young Vermonters interested in fermenting, brewing, and distilling careers.
- The Vermont Legislature and DLL should update state policy to reduce the influence of corporate liquor interests and advance the interests of small businesses. A good

incentive program would not necessarily increase total liquor sales in the state, but would shift the volume of sales towards local producers. This would generate more state revenue and build the strength of this industry.

- The COVID-19 pandemic State of Emergency helped us question the way we do things and identify clear priorities. Convenience and public safety can both be served by allowing alcohol delivery, relaxing alcohol take-out rules, and providing other safe outlets for buying distilled spirits (see Beer brief).

Vermont NRCS Announces EQIP Conservation Incentive Contracts

April 1, 2022 will be the first-round ranking date for Conservation Incentive Contracts (CIC), a new option from USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) available through the Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP). EQIP incentive contracts can be a steppingstone for producers who want to transition from EQIP classic to Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) contracts. Through EQIP, NRCS provides financial and technical assistance to install conservation practices that reduce soil erosion and sedimentation, improve soil health, improve water and air quality and create wildlife habitat.

The following three land uses and associated resource concerns will be prioritized in Vermont through EQIP CIC:

Forestland: Degraded Plant Condition; Terrestrial Habitat; Pest Pressure

Cropland: Field Sediment, Nutrient, and Pathogen Loss; Soil Quality Limitations; Wind and Water Erosion

Grazing: Degraded Plant Condition; Livestock Production Limitation; Concentrated Erosion

Producers should submit a signed application to the local NRCS field office indicating their interest in a five-year EQIP-CIC contract. While applications are accepted on a continuous basis, interested producers should submit applications to their local NRCS office by April 1 to be considered for this funding period.



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Email: Agr.agriview@vermont.gov, phone: 802-828-1619. Deadline for submissions is the 1st of each month for next month's issue. Example: January 1st deadline for February issue.

Cattle

14 bred Holstein heifers. Call Wayne (802) 285-6383 (11)

Now boarding heifers and beef cattle! If labor's too hard to find or short on feed, let us board your animals. 300 lbs and up, minimum group size of 50; Excellent facilities and feed is mix of haylage and corn silage or straight haylage, your choice. References available upon request. Call 802-533-2984 (12)

Registered Dutch Belted dairy heifers ages 2mons- ready to be bred starting \$300. Registered Dutch Belted mature breeding Bull certified A2/A2 \$1,600. 603-239-4397 or sarah@manninghillfarm.com

Employment

Co-producer wanted on our livestock farm to provide items to compliment what we now offer in our farm-store in North Danville, Vt. Currently producing certified organic Angus beef and non-certified pork and lamb. Can set aside acreage for other crops and livestock to be used by applicant in exchange for helping on the farm with current operations. Would consider labor barter for the new production. Could house additional cattle for a board/labor barter for someone interested in starting their own herd. Fully equipped farm that includes 120 owned open acres, 158 rented open acres and a 177-acre managed wood lot and a small sugarbush. Email Vince at badgerbrookmeats@gmail.com for more information. (12)

Small, diversified farm looking for a herd manager. Milking 25 Jerseys – housing provided. Experience necessary open to various options. Wonderful opportunity for responsible energetic person or couple. Call for details 4 Corners Farm. Newbury VT 802-866-3342, kimmgray@gmail.com. (12)

Equipment

Ford L 8000 tandem dump truck 19ft rack. Hyd dump with tail gate, electric automatic crood tires and body. New batteries 213,000 miles, \$17,500. 802-265-4589 (11)

John Deere Harrows 10ft, 30ft hay elevator good shape, 24ft hay elevator, 2 furrow plows, 3 furrow plows, 285 oliver spreader, 19 ton grain bin, 11 ton grain bin, 7 ft blade also I fix grain bin all over Vermont. 802-624-0143 or 802-895-4683 (11)

Bulk milk tank for sale: 1500 gal; DEC; excellent condition, \$8000 OBO. Doda separator-with screens, excellent condition, used very little, \$20,000 OBO. Call 802-533-2984 (12)

Used Federal 6 valve milk bottle filler for glass or plastic. Runs, but no capper \$6,500. 603-239-4397 or sarah@manninghillfarm.com

General

High tunnel greenhouse assembly & maintenance: Ledgewood, Harnois, Rimol and more. Complete assembly, end wall construction, poly installation, renovation, and repairs. Experienced and professional. Plan ahead! Get in touch now to get on the

2022 schedule. Contact Mike Feiner at feinervt@gmail.com, www.vineripe.net, (802) 498-8031. (11)

Hay, Feed & Forage

Excellent quality first cut wrapped round bales; baleage. Shelburne VT Call Andy 802-598-6060. Analysis available upon request.

Organic haylage 12% protein \$45 per ton, 15% protein \$55 per ton. 802-537-2435

4x4 round balage mixed grains cut late June. \$30 802-325-3707

1st cut 4x5 round bales. Don Pettis, 802-265-4566.

Certified Organic First Cut Wrapped Round Bales for sale. Clover, Timothy and mixed grasses. Test samples and delivery available. Call Matt 802-558-3879.

Vetch & rye seeds for sale, mixed in 50 lb. bags, \$1/lb. certified by Vermont Organic Farmers. Thornhill Farm, 198 Taylor Road, Greensboro Bend, VT 05842, todd@thornhillfarmvermont.com, 802-441-3176

2021 First cut \$ 4.00 At barn in ryegate. Call Steve, 802-584-4450

Hay for sale: 1st cut organic round bales. Randolph Center. Call John at 522-8798

Certified organic first cut wrapped round bales for sale – cut by mid June, good sized and well made. Asking \$50/each with 200 bales available. Beidler Family Farm, Randolph Center Contact: 802-728-5601 or brentbeidler@gmail.com.

Excellent quality first, second, and third cut wrapped round bales for sale. First cut by June 1, dry. \$50.00/bale Please call 802-454-7198

1st, 2nd and 3rd cut haylage and corn silage for sale at the bunk. Call 802-533-2984.

Dry 2nd Cut Hay for Sale 5' round bales, avg. 750 lbs,



\$100/bale- Craftsbury, VT 802-624-0539

Certified organic 4x4 round bales for sale. First cut 45.00, second and third 55.00. 802-793-7526

Excellent quality wrapped round bales for sale. \$50/bale. No emails. Please call 802-454-7198

1st cut 4 x 4 wrapped round bales \$45/bale Call Tom at 802-457-5834

1st, 2nd & 3rd cut round bales. 2nd cut square bales - \$6.00/bale. Volume discount for square and round bales. Please call Chris at 802-272-0548.

ADDISON COUNTY

1st cut 4x5 round bales never wet. Good horse & cow hay. 802-948-2627 or 802-558-0166

Certified organic, small square bales always stacked and stored under cover, 35-40lbs/bale. \$4/bale, discounts available for large quantities. 802-989-0781 for inquiries.

Hay for Sale in Addison, VT. Large square bales and small squares. \$50-60 for Large, \$3.50-4.50 for Small. Delivery Available. Call Jack 802-989-8968

Hay for sale. \$3.25 bale. 802-377-5455

1st cut 5ft diameter round bales. \$30-\$35 Orwell 802-948-2211

Straw for sale - \$7/bale for 50 or more. \$8/bale for less than 50, \$6/bale for all in the barn, approx. 350. from our winter rye harvest in August. certified organic.

Thornhill Farm, Greensboro Bend, 05842, todd@thornhillfarmvermont.com, 802.441.3176

Hay for Sale, Cows have been sold. 750 Lb 4X5 round bales stored inside or tube wrapped.

Bedding/Mulch \$35 Heifer/Beef \$40 Dairy \$55 I will load your truck. In Whiting Call 802-623-6584

Large organic round bales good heifer/dry cow hay \$45/bale call 802-948-2382 evenings

BENNINGTON COUNTY

Corn Silage 1000 ton plus. Haylage 500 ton plus. Round bales 4x4. Square bales small. 802-394-2976

CALEDONIA COUNTY

Square baled hay- Top quality, VOF certified organic, generous sized. 1st cut \$4.50/bale, 2nd cut \$5.50/bale at the barn in Barnet. 802-592-3088

1st & 2nd Cut Alfalfa mix 600lb Wrapped Hay Baleage. For Questions, Prices and Orders call (802) 375-5647

CHITTENDEN COUNTY

Round bales for horses. Clean first cut timothy mixed grass, quality net wrapped 4' X 5' bales. Never wet. \$45. each. 802- 879-0391 Westford.

15 large 5x5 round bales mixed grass w/some timothy + clover 800+lbs \$50 ea. call 899-4126

FRANKLIN COUNTY

Good Quality Hay 1c & 2c from western US & Canada. Alfalfa orchard & orchard sweet grass 18 to 20% plus protein large bales & organic by trailer loads. Large or small square bales of straw whole or processed at farm we load on direct delivery by trailer load. Mountain View Dairy Farm 802-849-6266

Excellent 2021 1st cut hay wrapped round bales for sale. Call Wayne (802) 285-6383

LAMOILLE COUNTY

Organic baled straw. \$5.50/bale. Organic First Cut

CLASSIFIEDS

Hay. \$5.00/bale. Certified Organic. Valley Dream Farm, Cambridge. 802-644-6598. valleydreamfarm@gmail.com.

and pick up. Call for prices and delivery charge. 1-802-744-2444 or 802-274-4934 or 802-744-6553.

ORLEANS COUNTY

Pure alfalfa for sale and also 1st, 2nd and 3rd cut big/small squares, round bales, wrapped or unwrapped, straw and switch grass. Call Richard at 802-323-3275.

Organic Certified Silage for Sale: We will deliver from our farm or you can come

North Troy- Good quality Certified organic large round bales, some dry and some wrapped and 9x200 ft ag bags fo haylage. Also conventional large round bales and 9x200ag bags of haylage. Delivery available 802-988-2959 or 802-274-2832

RUTLAND COUNTY

Good quality 1st and 2nd round bales, wrapped and dried. Call 802-446-2435.

WASHINGTON COUNTY

200-4x4 round bales 1st & 2nd cut \$45 each. 802-229-9871

Wrapped dry hay. Excellent quality never got wet. Perfect for horses or dairy. \$50/bale. No email. Please call 802-454-7198.

WINDHAM COUNTY

1st cut hay. Good horse hay. \$4.50/bale 802-254-5069

WINDSOR COUNTY

Hay for sale-400 square bales, Reading, Windsor County Vt. \$3.50 per bale at the barn. Call 802-484-7240

4x5 dry round bales \$45.00 delivery available. 802-457-1376

Rolling Meadows Farm: square bales in the field or barn \$4.00. Delivery can be arranged at \$5.50. Very nice hay from fertilized fields in the South Woodstock and Reading area. Call 802-484-5540 or goodfarmvt@gmail.com. Ask for David.

1st. cut dry round bales for sale. Never been rained on, stored under cover. \$50. @ 1st. cut haylage bales for sale. \$45. Rte. 5 Weathersfield Bow 802-546-4340.

Dry Round Horse Hay, \$50/ Bale. 200 Bales left. Call 802-356-5030.

Swine

Four piglets wormed, cut and ironed. Born June 25,2021 Asking \$70.00 each Call 603-256-8422 (11)

Wanted

Wanted: caretaker for "hobby" horse farm in the

Upper Valley of Vermont, Woodstock area. Onsite housing provided. Part time light duties are perfect for retired person or couple. Mail inquiries to wrbfarm1@aol.com. References required. (11)

Patz 16-inch clockwise gutter cleaner chain wanted. 802-645-0865. (12)

Northeast Cover Crops Council Conference

The Northeast Cover Crops Council (NECCC), the Pennsylvania Association for Sustainable Agriculture (PASA), and the University of Vermont Extension invite you to join us for the fifth annual Northeast Cover Crops Council Conference. It will be held virtually over two half-days.

WHEN: Thursday, March 10 and Friday, March 11, 2022
TIME: 9:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. each day

Mark your calendars to join your fellow cover crop enthusiasts for two mornings of interactive online presentations, panels, and training sessions.

CCA CEUs will be available. Registration is \$75 per person. Register today at <http://go.uvm.edu/registration-2022neccc>.

Agency Contact Numbers

To help you find the right number for your question, please consult the list below. You are always welcome to call our main line 802-828-2430. We will do our best to route you to person most able to answer your question quickly and accurately.

Program Phone Numbers

Act 250	828-2431
Animal Health	828-2421
Business Development.....	828-1619
Dairy	828-2433
Enforcement: Water Quality or Pesticide. . .	828-2431
Feed, Seed, Fertilizer & Lime.....	828-5050
Licensing & Registration	828-2436
Meat Inspection	828-2426
Produce Program.....	461-5128
Vermont Agriculture & Environmental Lab..	585-6073
Water Quality BMP.....	828-3474
Water Quality Grants	622-4098
Water Quality Reports.....	272-0323
Weights & Measures	828-2433
Working Lands.....	622-4477

LFO Annual Report and Operating Fee Reminder

LFOs must submit an annual report and operating fee of \$2,500 to the VAAFM by February 15 of each year. A fillable PDF of the annual report form, additional forms, and information can be found at <https://agriculture.vermont.gov/lfo>.

Checks of \$2,500 shall be made payable to Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food & Markets and submitted to:

VAAFM
Attn Jeff Cook
116 State Street, Montpelier, VT 05620-2901



Initial Pesticide Certification Meeting

Review of the Northeast CORE Manual followed by the Vermont Pesticide Applicator CORE Exam
This program will provide FOUR (4) Vermont recertification credits.

April 19: Armed Forces Reserve Center, White River Junction, VT

April 21: Robert Miller Community Center, Burlington, VT

Register at <https://go.uvm.edu/h26ce>

Visit www.uvm.edu/extension/psep for more information about the program or contact Sarah Kingsley-Richards at (802) 656-0475 sarah.kingsley@uvm.edu



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Meet the Support Team for the Food Safety & Consumer Protection (FSCP) Division

By Dr. Kristin Haas, VT
Agency of Agriculture, Food & Markets

Simply put, **Stephanie Parks** is a force of nature! Currently in her 38th year with the Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets, there is very little that she doesn't know, herself, or doesn't know who to engage to get the answers you need! Although Stephanie primarily supports the Animal Health section in ways too numerous to count, she is well versed in other Agency programs and is always willing to pinch hit to fill the gaps. Stephanie has also mentored and trained many new employees over the years, and we are fortunate that she has been able to pay it forward and pass on her knowledge and expertise to her colleagues, for your benefit.

Stephanie is our guru when it comes to tracing livestock, whether for drills or real-life emergencies. While we certainly hope that Vermont does not experience a high consequence animal disease outbreak, we know that Stephanie's "contact tracing" skills will enable the Animal Health team to contain disease spread as quickly as possible, thereby lessening the impact to Vermont's animal agricultural industries, should we be faced with that circumstance in the future.

You will usually find Stephanie working her magic in our Montpelier office, and when asked what her most memorable phone call has



Stephanie Parks

been in almost four decades of state service, she says there are too many to even recall! She has enjoyed helping so many people (us and you!) over the years and working with a knowledgeable, dedicated, and great group of colleagues. Even after so many years of public service, Stephanie reassures us that she still finds happiness in the work she completes on a daily basis!

Sometimes that work does get a bit messy, though. Stephanie recalls one time more than a decade ago when she was assisting the animal health specialists with sample collections on a Vermont dairy farm, and as is always possible in that environment, Stephanie found herself abruptly on the ground after stepping on a "slippery" spot. We probably don't need to tell you what constitutes a slippery spot in a dairy free stall barn, so let's just leave it that the cow pies softened Stephanie's fall, and the ride back to the office that day was completed with windows down! No

administrative services coordinators were injured during the making of that memory, and Stephanie can still find humor in it to this day!

During her free time, Stephanie enjoys spending time with her family, including her grandchildren, who now live locally.

Thank you, Stephanie, for always being there for your FSCP team and the Vermonters we serve!

Ian Wilson celebrated his two-year anniversary with the FSCP Division on December 16th, just a short time ago, and he has enhanced our team tremendously since he joined us! As a Dairy Administrator II, Ian's primary responsibilities are completed in collaboration with the Dairy Program's specialists and managers, but like Stephanie, Ian is cross trained to efficiently cover a myriad of additional responsibilities.

Ian processes all FSCP's Certificates of Free Sale, most commonly at the

request of Vermont's maple and dairy businesses. Issuance of these certificates enables Vermont businesses to access international markets and helps ensure that Vermont's signature food products are available to consumers world-wide. Ian is also taking on the responsibility of managing the documentation associated with our compliance and enforcement programs so those who find themselves engaging the FSCP Division in that manner may also find themselves communicating with Ian. He is the right man for the job, and Ian's calm, competent and professional manner is exactly what is needed in what can sometimes be stressful situations. For those of you who move livestock interstate, you may hear Ian's voice on the other end of the phone when you call to acquire a movement permit or inquire about movement requirements. Spring through fall is the busy season for livestock movement in Vermont, and Ian works closely with Stephanie to

efficiently field the call volume, keeping your livestock in commerce!

Not long after Ian joined the FSCP team, the world changed dramatically, but he has rolled with the punches and maintained a high level of efficiency, professionalism and patience, despite having to onboard with the Agency under challenging (and remote) circumstances.

Ian notes that the cooperation and teamwork displayed by his FSCP colleagues have brought a sense of unity, kindness and efficiency to each day, and he appreciates the many moments during the Covid-19 pandemic where the whole team has been able to navigate varied degrees of difficulty in order to consistently move forward. Ian has also appreciated the kind words and smiles in the workplace and acknowledgments given. He is always quick to return that kindness, and we know that comes through in his communications with you, too!

continued on page 16



Ian Wilson

Vermont Hemp Production Plan Approved by USDA

By Stephanie Smith, VT
Agency of Agriculture, Food & Markets

The Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets' Hemp Program received approval from the Agricultural Marketing Service of the U. S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) of the Vermont Hemp Production plan. The approved plan supports the Vermont Hemp Rules and governs registration, production, and compliance for hemp cultivation beginning in 2022. All grower registrants should be aware of and thinking about these programmatic changes required by the 2018 Farm Bill, USDA's final rule, and as reflected in Vermont Hemp Production plan, and how it may impact their operations. The following summary of changes to the Vermont Hemp Program *that applies to all registrants of the Vermont Hemp Program that grow at any scale, including those growing under a personal use registration and those producing hemp for research purposes.*

THC Compliance is 0.3% and includes both THC and THC-A

- The acceptable hemp tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) level is when, after the application of the measurement of uncertainty, the range of total delta-9-THC concentration includes 0.3 percent or less, as measured on a dry weight basis. Total delta-

9-THC includes the potential conversion of tetrahydrocannabinolic acid into THC.

- Cannabis plants exceeding the acceptable hemp THC level constitute marijuana, a schedule I controlled substance under the federal Controlled Substances Act and registrants/licensees must either ensure the disposal of such cannabis plants on site at the farm or hemp production facility or use a DEA-registered reverse distributor or law enforcement to dispose of non-compliant plants.
- A negligent violation occurs when a cannabis plant's total delta-9-THC concentration exceeds 1.0%.
 - Registrants may be able to remediate and retest a harvest lot that exceeds the acceptable hemp THC level by
 - Removing flowers and leaves and disposing of them appropriately, and retaining only stalk; or
 - Chipping the entire plant into biomass for extraction or other commercial purposes.

New registration and reporting requirements

- A registration will not be issued unless a criminal history report(s), submitted within 60 days of an application submission, confirms that the key participant listed on the registration has not been convicted of a felony relating to a controlled substance within the past

ten (10) years. If the applicant registrant was lawfully cultivating hemp under the 2014 Farm Bill and registered on or before December 20, 2018, and has felony conviction relating to a controlled substance that also occurred before that date, they may be a registrant of the program.

- All registrants/licensees must report hemp crop acreage to the Farm Service Agency within 30 days of planting hemp and provide the location where hemp is being produced, acreage or square footage of all areas dedicated to hemp production, and the issued registration/license number.

Significant changes to sampling practices including the requirement to use sampling agents when taking samples for potency testing

- Registered hemp producers are no longer able to collect samples of their own crops. Sampling must be performed by a "sampling agent". Vermont will use USDA's sampling agent training to establish who is eligible to be a sampling agent.
 - Hemp producers (registrants of the Vermont Hemp Program), employees of individuals or businesses registered to grow or process hemp, individuals residing in the same household as a hemp producer

registrant, or individuals related to Vermont hemp producers are not eligible to become sampling agents.

- Sampling agents must collect floral material from the flowering tops of the plant by cutting the top five to eight inches from the "main stem" (that includes the leaves and flowers), "terminal flower" (that occurs at the end of a stem), or "central cola" (cut stem that could develop into a flower) of the top of the plant. Depending on the size of harvest lot, multiple cuttings will comprise the representative sample.
- Sampling must occur no more than 30 days prior to harvest.
- If the registrant/licensee fails to complete a harvest within thirty (30) days of a sample collection, a second pre-harvest sample of the remainder of the lot shall be required to be submitted for potency testing.
- Sampling agents must have complete and unrestricted access to all hemp and other cannabis plants, (whether growing or harvested), all hemp

production and storage areas, all land, buildings, and other structures used for the cultivation, handling, and storage of all hemp and other cannabis plants, and all locations listed in the producer license.

Laboratories that conduct pre-harvest potency testing must report their results to USDA, using the HeMP online document management system, <https://www.ams.usda.gov/rules-regulations/hemp/hemp-management-platform>. Effective on January 1, 2023, all registrants/licensees may only use DEA-registered laboratories to conduct THC potency testing.

Please see the Code of Federal Regulation review the requirements of the Domestic Hemp Production Program, <https://ecfr.federalregister.gov/current/title-7/subtitle-B/chapter-IX/part-990>. For more information on hemp regulation in Vermont, please contact Stephanie Smith, Stephanie.smith@vermont.gov or Michael DiTomasso, Michael.DiTomasso@vermont.gov.

Vermont Farm Bureau is a grassroots not-for-profit membership organization dedicated to supporting Vermont farm families, agriculture and forestry.

We advocate for public policies that strengthen and grow our agricultural economy and conserve our natural resources.

www.vtfb.org



Apply Now for Vermont Specialty Crop Block Grant Program Funding

By Gina Clithero, VT Agency of Agriculture, Food & Markets

Apply now for a 2022 Vermont Specialty Crop Block Grant Program award or a Specialty Crop Producer Association Grant. The deadline to apply to both opportunities is Sunday, February 27, 2022. Specialty crops are fruits, vegetables, tree nuts, honey, hops, maple syrup, mushrooms, culinary herbs and spices, medicinal plants, nursery crops (including Christmas Trees), and floriculture.

Learn more and apply now for the following funding opportunities:

2022 Vermont Specialty Crop Block Grant Program: Specialty Crop Block Grant Program (SCBGP) funds enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops by— (1) leveraging efforts to market

and promote specialty crops, (2) assisting producers with research and development relevant to specialty crops, (3) expanding availability and access to specialty crops, and (4) addressing local, regional, and national challenges confronting specialty crop producers.

Any entity may apply, but projects must benefit more than one specialty crop business, individual, or organization. Applicants should describe how a project will benefit a specialty crop industry, a group of producers or businesses, or the public rather than a single business or organization.

Apply Now: agriculture.vermont.gov/grants/specialtycrop.

Specialty Crop Producer Association Grant: This grant opportunity will support producer associations that serve specialty crop

businesses. Eligible applicants are producer associations, cooperatives, and groups of specialty crop producers. Service providers that serve producer associations, cooperatives, and groups of producers are also eligible.

This grant is possible thanks to additional federal funding from a COVID-19 related stimulus bill.

Apply Now: agriculture.vermont.gov/grants/specialtycrop/producer.

The deadline to apply

for both opportunities is **February 27, 2022, at 11:59 PM.**

Please contact AGR.SpecialtyCrops@vermont.gov or 802-585-6225 with any questions.

Upcoming Grant Opportunities

The Agency of Agriculture, Food & Markets is pleased to be able to help you identify upcoming grant opportunities. Please go to <https://agriculture.vermont.gov/grants/calendar> for more information.

Programs Open Year-Round

Farmstead Best Management Practices (BMP) Program

Technical and financial assistance for engineered conservation practices on Vermont farms.

Jenn LaValley
Jenn.LaValley@vermont.gov
(802) 828-2431

Pasture And Surface Water Fencing (PSWF) Program

Technical and financial assistance for pasture management and livestock exclusion from surface water on Vermont farms.

Kaitlin Hayes
Kaitlin.Hayes@vermont.gov
(802) 622-4112

Grassed Waterway and Filter Strip (GWFS) Program

Technical and financial assistance for implementing buffers and seeding down critical areas on VT farms.

Sonia Howlett
Sonia.Howlett@vermont.gov
(802) 522-4655

Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP)

Implementation costs of vegetated buffers and rental payments for maintained buffers on Vermont

agricultural land.

Ben Gabos
Ben.Gabos@Vermont.gov
(802) 461-3814

Phil Wilson
Phillip.Wilson@vermont.gov
(802) 505-5378

February

Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP)

Implementation costs of vegetated buffers and rental payments for maintained buffers on Vermont agricultural land.

Ben Gabos
Ben.Gabos@Vermont.gov
(802) 461-3814

Phil Wilson
Phillip.Wilson@vermont.gov
(802) 505-5378

March

Farm To School Vision Grant

Grants for innovative ideas that address emergent farm to school issues

Trevor Lowell
Trevor.Lowell@vermont.gov
(802) 585-9186

April

Dairy Marketing & Branding Services Grant

Grants for value-added dairy processors to access professional services to implement marketing tactics, brand improvements, and overall strategy

Kathryn Donovan
Kathryn.Donovan@vermont.gov
(802) 585-4571

Save the Date: 2022 Industrial Hemp Conference

By Stephanie Smith, VT Agency of Agriculture, Food & Markets

The University of Vermont Extension Northwest Crops & Soils Program and Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets are hosting the 4th annual Industrial Hemp Conference virtually on Tuesday and Wednesday, March 15 & 16, 2022.

The conference will include both live and recorded sessions on topics covering hemp varietal research, pest management, developing a marketing plan for hemp products, and new requirements for growers under a USDA approved hemp production plan.

If you are interested in sponsoring the conference, please contact Susan Brouillette at 802-524-6501 or Susan.Brouillette@uvm.edu

Sugarhouse Certification Program

By Vermont Maple
Sugarmakers Association

Have you considered signing up for the Sugarhouse Certification Program? This program is our interpretation of current food safety rules. While participating in the Certification Program is voluntary, following food safety rules is required for sugar makers. We've worked to anticipate barriers to participating in this program, from cost to templates for processes and procedures. You'll find all of the details below, but feel free to give us a call with any questions!

Our goal is to offer an accessible, yet comprehensive program that will ensure



sugar makers are using the highest standards to make quality Vermont maple syrup, maple sugar and maple cream in accordance with all food safety standards. We will work with sugar makers to ensure that we answer any questions

you might have ahead of Certification, that we offer a full complement of sample policies and documents for your use and that you are ready for Certification before we arrive for an onsite visit.

Before you sign up for the Program, please read through

this information, including the Certification Checklist, to ensure you understand how it works and what will be expected. In addition, we held an "Introduction to Certification" session on Zoom on May 12, 2021 and offered space for sugar makers to ask any questions about the Program. You can watch that session online [here](#).

How Does the Program Work?

We have contracted with four Sugarhouse Food Safety Specialists to complete the Certifications. Once you sign up and submit payment, you'll be assigned a Specialist based on your location. The Specialist will schedule time

to talk to you on the phone or via Zoom to complete the work that can be done offsite — documentation review and answering any questions specific to your operation. Once that work is complete, they'll schedule a site visit to work through the rest of the Checklist. To better illustrate the steps from "I'm interested in the Certification Program" to "I'm ready to sign up" to "I'm Certified!", we've created a simple flow-chart to show you how it all works.

Have questions? You can review our FAQs on the website or get in touch for more information. You can reach Allison Hope by email allison@vermontmaple.org or by phone 802-777-2667.

FSCP Team

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Ian marvels at the entrepreneurial mindset of Vermonters, especially within our dairy industry, and has enjoyed triaging and troubleshooting Vermonters' questions related to novel business ideas. That creativity and perseverance is one of the things that makes Vermont special, and Ian is now able to experience that first-hand. We know that once you talk with Ian, you will appreciate his excellent customer service as much as we do — thank you, Ian!

Alma Greene is one of FSCP's newest employees, having started employment with the Agency of Agriculture in October of this year. Alma's tenure with

Vermont state government has been a bit longer – 11 years – and we are fortunate to have crossed employment paths with such a talented and dedicated team member!

Since her arrival, Alma has been drinking from the proverbial fire hose. The Meat Inspection program is complex and operates under a mixture of state and federal laws, rules, and directives, but Alma has been methodically working through those complexities to fully understand the program she supports while also embracing opportunities for cross-training. A strong work ethic and enthusiasm for the charge at hand are not trainable attributes - you either have them

or you don't. Alma has them in spades, and her positive attitude and willingness to learn are infectious and inspiring to those who work with her. We are confident that any interaction you have with Alma will leave you in a better mood after as

compared to before!

Make no bones about it – work can be stressful in the busy Meat Inspection section, but Alma loves the team spirit of her work unit. She appreciates that everybody is willing to lend a helping hand and work together toward common goals to ensure safe food products. Alma also enjoys sharing her culture and traditions with co-workers and with all of you! If you choose to tackle the creation of Oaxacan tamales, Alma would love to know how you fare!

In her spare time, Alma enjoys sewing, playing piano, listening to jazz, reading, cooking, and swimming. In the summer she takes care of a small garden

where she grows peonies, herbs and vegetables. And of course, Alma spends considerable time taking her daughter on rides to show her the beauty of Vermont. Sounds like a pretty great way to grow up!

We look forward to many more years with Alma on our team and know that you will be in fantastic hands any time you communicate with her. Welcome, Alma!

Have questions?? You can reach our work units within the FSCP Division using the following numbers:

Agricultural Products –
802-828-2433

Animal Health –
802-828-2421

Dairy – 802-828-2433

Meat Inspection –
802-828-2426

Weights and Measures –
802-828-2433



Alma Greene